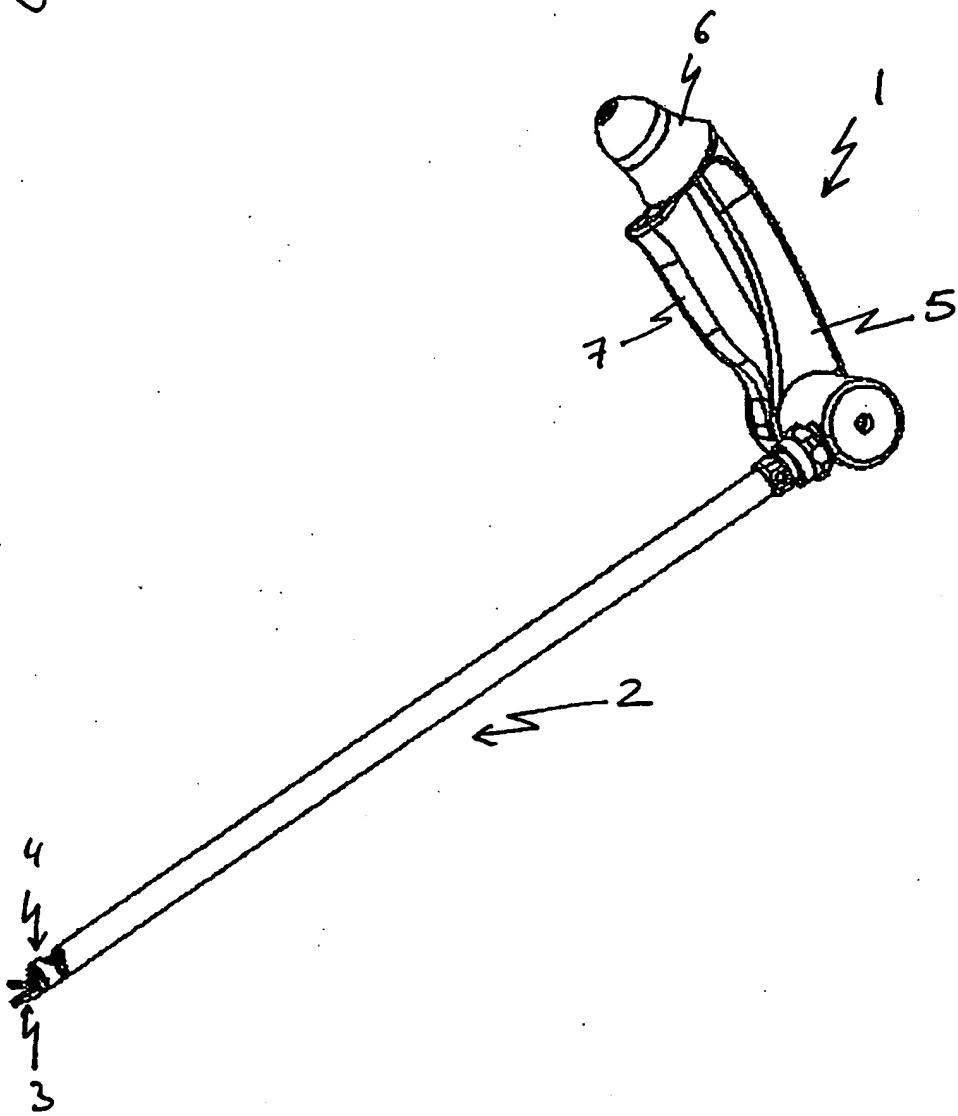


Fig. 1



## **CLAIM OBJECTIONS**

Claims 2, 3, 6, 7, and 14-16 were objected to by the Examiner at page 3 of the outstanding final Office Action. Claim 2 has been cancelled and the subject matter of claim 2 has been incorporated into the independent claims, with appropriate corrections. Claims 3, 6, 7, and 15 have been amended to correct informalities in the claims. Claims 14 and 16, which were also objected to, have not been amended. However, claim 12, from which claims 14 and 16 depend, has been amended to provide proper antecedent support. In view of the amendments to the claims, the outstanding objections to the claims should be resolved.

## **ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER**

In the Office Action at page 13, numbered item 19, the Examiner indicated that claims 7-11 contain allowable subject matter. As previously indicated, claim 7 has been amended to resolve the Examiner's objections. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 7-11 are in condition for allowance.

In the Office Action at page 14, numbered item 20, the Examiner indicated that claim 2 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims and alleviating all objections. Applicants respectfully submit that the subject matter of dependent claim 2, with appropriate corrections to alleviate all objections, has been incorporated into independent claims 1, 12, and 17. As the features taught by former dependent claim 2 are not taught or suggested by the prior art, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claims 1, 12, and 17 now also patentably distinguish over the prior art and are in condition for allowance.

## **REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103**

In the Office Action at pages 4-13, numbered items 7-18, claims 1, 3-6, and 12-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over published Japanese Patent Application JP 05-145813 A by Isokawa in view of published Japanese Patent Application JP 04-257459 A by Nakai, et al. The reasons for the rejection are set forth in the Office Action and therefore not repeated. The rejection is traversed and reconsideration is requested.

Independent claims 1, 12, and 17 have been amended to incorporate the features previously found in dependent claim 2, which the Examiner has indicated as allowable. In view of these amendments to the independent claims, Applicants respectfully submit that these

objections are moot and claims 1, 3-6, and 12-17, which now patentably distinguish over the prior art for the same reasons as allowable dependent claim 2, are in condition for allowance.

## CONCLUSION

In accordance with the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that all outstanding objections and rejections have been overcome and/or rendered moot. And further, that all pending claims patentably distinguish over the prior art. Thus, there being no further outstanding objections or rejections, the application is submitted as being in condition for allowance which action is earnestly solicited. At a minimum, this Amendment should be entered at least for purposes of Appeal as it either clarifies and/or narrows the issues for consideration by the Board.

If the Examiner has any remaining issues to be addressed, it is believed that prosecution can be expedited and possibly concluded by the Examiner contacting the undersigned attorney for a telephone interview to discuss any such remaining issues.

If there are any underpayments or overpayments of fees associated with the filing of this Amendment, please charge and/or credit the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

By:   
David M. Pitcher  
Registration No. 25,908

Date: March 22, 2005  
1201 New York Ave, N.W., Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
Telephone: (202) 434-1500  
Facsimile: (202) 434-1501